

August 24, 2009

Sir Nigel Sheinwald
Ambassador
British Embassy
3100 Massachusetts Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20008

Dear Mr. Ambassador:

I am outraged by the Scottish Government's recent decision to release convicted Pan Am Flight 103 bomber Abdelbaset Ali Mohmet al-Megrahi.

Eight people from Maryland died onboard Pan Am 103. They were Michael Bernstein, Jay Kingham, Karen Noonan, Ann Lindsey Otenasek, Anita Reeves, Louise Rogers, Miriam Wolf and George Williams. They were college students, a young Army Lieutenant, a business man and a lawyer. They were sons, daughters, and fathers. They were just trying to get home to their families. As their United States Senator I pledged to their families that we would never forget them and that we would ensure justice was served.

The decision to release Megrahi demonstrates an appalling disregard for the frustration and grief it would cause among families of the Lockerbie victims. In justifying the release, Scottish Justice Minister Kenny MacAskill spoke of a "need for compassion." Apparently, he did not see fit to consider the need for compassion toward the families of the 270 innocent Pan Am 103 passengers who died at Megrahi's hand. Megrahi's conviction offered those families a very small measure of closure and justice. Now, Megrahi is receiving a hero's welcome in Libya after less than ten years in jail. Images of his return to cheering crowds in Libya have caused deep anguish and pain among the families of the Lockerbie victims. The decision to allow Megrahi to die among his family while he stole that very right from the 270 victims he murdered is a grave injustice. If the goal of the Scottish government was compassion, then it has failed to achieve that goal.

The apparent failure to consult with the American law enforcement community in considering whether to release Megrahi is a slap in the face to the dedicated police, investigators, prosecutors and others on both sides of the Atlantic who worked so hard to obtain a fair trial and just conviction of Megrahi. How dare any one official in the Scottish government substitute their judgment to award freedom to a murderer for the careful deliberation of the courts that convicted and sentenced that murderer to life in prison? The Scottish government has failed utterly in its responsibility to all victims of terrorism to hold murderers like Megrahi accountable for their crimes against humanity. I am outraged and deeply disappointed.

Sincerely,

Barbara A. Mikulski
United States Senator